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AUTHOR Brunner, Joan Caroline; Starkey, John
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ABSTRACT

Evaluated was the self-concept of 65 learning disabled emotionally disturbed, remedial, and average high school students. Testing with William C. Schutz's scale of Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior indicated that the remedial group scored significantly lower than the other groups in areas such as expressed control. The findings did not support the hypothesis that special education students have a lower self concept than students in other groups. (Author/MC)

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Interpersonal Relationships and the Self-Concept

Joan Caroline Brunner
Graduate Student
Northern Illinois University

John Starkey
Professor
Northern Illinois University

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the self-concept of students with Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotionally Disturbed, Remedial, and Average classes. The 65 students were tested with William C. Schutz's scale of Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior. The Remedial group scored significantly lower in some areas.

INTRODUCTION

The general opinion concerning the self-concept of students enrolled in special education programs has been that because of a particular handicap a lower self-concept than other students was indicated. These particular handicaps would in turn make them feel different from and thus separated from others.

The hypothesis set forth in this study is as follows: high school students who have been diagnosed and placed in special education programs for Specific Learning Disabilities and Emotionally Disturbed will tend to have a lower self-concept than those enrolled in Remedial and Average classes.

A study was conducted to determine this possibility in high school students by evaluating their scores on a test for Interpersonal Relations and relating them to self-concept development.

The sample used was 65 students from three high schools in the suburban area of a large midwestern city. The population was divided into students diagnosed with Learning Disabilities (18), students diagnosed

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as Emotionally Disturbed (8), Remedial students according to grade point average (22), Average students (17).

The instrument used for testing was William C. Schutz's scale of Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior, known as the FIRO - B. The test was administered individually to the special education students in a resource room setting and to the Remedial and Average students in a classroom setting.

The instrument itself took approximately ten to twenty minutes to administer, with little or no explanation of the directions being required. Six specific areas are examined in FIRO - B. Two general categories of behavior, Wanted and Expressed, each of which is placed in subdivisions of Inclusion, Control, and Affection. Schutz states the dimensions parelleling the afore mentioned subdivisions are, respectively: Significance, Competence, and Loveability. (2)

THE DATA

A T-Test was used to compare the scores of the 65 students, according to sex and group classifications. Each of the three areas, Inclusion, Control and Affection within Expressed and Wanted Behavior categories, was examined, plus the total scores for each of those five areas. The hypothesis predicted that the special education students would score significantly lower than the Remedial and Average students.

The results indicated that the areas of concentrated significant differences were Expression of Control, Wanted Affection, and the totals in the areas of Control, Affection and Wanted Behavior.

In the area of sex difference, as seen in Table I, the males scored significantly higher than the females on Expressed Control, and the females scored significantly higher than the males on Wanted Affection

and the overall Affection area.

When examining the groups, it should be mentioned that the Remedial group scored lower than the other three. The Learning Disabilities group scored higher on Expressed Control than did the Remedial group. The Emotionally Disturbed students scored almost significantly higher than the Remedial group on Wanted Behavior. The Average group scored significantly higher than the Remedial group in the areas of Expressed Control, the totals of Wanted Behavior, Control, and almost significantly higher in the Wanted Control and Wanted Affection areas.

Thus, the prediction that students in special education programs would be lower in self-concept than Remedial and Average students has not been supported by the data in the study.

Table I

MEAN SCORES OF MEN AND WOMEN ON THE FIRO-B

FIRO-B	MEANS	MEN	WOMEN
Expressed Inclusion		4.04	4.95
Wanted Inclusion		3.88	4.63
Expressed Control		3.55 *	1.95 *
Wanted Control		4.23	3.31
Expressed Affection		3.13	3.81
Wanted Affection		2.90 *	5.13 *
	Number	43	22

* Significantly different from each other at the .05 level.

Table II

MEAN SCORES OF FOUR
GROUPS ON FIRO-B

FIRO-B	MEANS	I	II	III	IV
Expressed Inclusion		3.94	5.25	4.36	4.35
Wanted Inclusion		3.55	5.50	3.77	4.58
Expressed Control		3.38*	3.12	1.86*	4.05*
Wanted Control		4.38	4.62	2.95	4.35
Expressed Affection		3.88	3.37	3.18	3.05
Wanted Affection		3.22	4.25	3.04	4.64

* Significantly different from each other at the .05 level (group I as related to group III and then IV)

GROUP CLASSIFICATIONS

I - Learning Disabilities
II - Emotionally Disturbed
III - Remedial
IV - Average

INTERPRETATION

Examining the data, the following information seems to be indicated. All four of the groups scored generally low to average on the six specific areas. Schutz explains Inclusion briefly in the areas of self-concept: "With regard to self-concept, the need for inclusion is the need to feel that the self is significant and worthwhile." (1) Among the groups, there appeared to be no significant difference in attitudes in this area.

The next category, that of Control is explained by Schutz in relation to self-concept: "The need for control defined at the level of perceiving the self, is the need to feel that one is a competent,

responsible person." (1) Within this category, three groups expressed control: Learning Disability students, males, and Average students, significantly higher than the Remedial students. Possibly this is an indication that Remedial students make no effort to have control and thus no responsibility concerning their lives. Schutz explains that, "The need for control manifests itself as a desire for power, authority and control over others and therefore over one's future." (1)

The third area examined, that of Affection, is explained by Schutz as follows: "The need for affection, defined at the level of self-concept, is the need to feel that the self is loveable." (1) In this category, the major significance was between the males and females, the females scoring higher in that area. Also, the Average group scored higher than the Remedials. Overall, however, the four groups scored low to average.

Thus, the data collected in the research does not support the original hypothesis: that students who have been diagnosed and placed in special education programs for Specific Learning Disabilities and Emotionally Disturbed, will tend to have lower self-concepts than those enrolled in Remedial and Average classes. The interesting information that resulted however, is that Remedial students have significantly lower scores in several areas than all of the other groups. Relating this to the above definitions, it would seem that Remedial students as a group have a lower self-concept when relating their scores on the FIRO-B to Learning Disabilities, Emotionally Disturbed and Average students.

SUMMARY

This study was based on the hypothesis that high school students who were diagnosed and enrolled in special education courses for

Learning Disabilities and Emotionally Disturbed, will tend to have lower self-concepts than those enrolled in Remedial and Average classes.

The group studied consisted of 65 students from three high schools in a suburban area of a large midwestern city. The testing instrument used was the FIRO - B, in an effort to relate the scores to self-concept development. Six areas of Interpersonal Relations were examined: Expressed Behavior of Inclusion, Control and Affection, and Wanted Behavior of Inclusion, Control and Affection.

In reviewing the data, it was discovered that the hypothesis was not supported. Although all groups scored low to average in all areas, the Remedial group of students scored significantly lower than Learning Disabilities students in Expressed Control, than Emotionally Disturbed in Wanted Behavior and than the Average students in the areas of Expressed Control and the totals in the areas of Wanted Behavior, Control, and almost significantly in the areas of Wanted Control and Wanted Affection.

Thus, it would seem to be indicated by this study that the students in the Remedial classes have lower self-concepts than special education and Average students when compared on the FIRO - B scale.

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